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### **Air National Guard Airmen of the Year**

**BALTIMORE**– Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., announced today that three members of the Maryland Air National Guard's 175th Wing have been selected as Airmen of the Year for 2004. This year's winners will next compete with other Air National Guardsmen from throughout the U.S., and if selected, move on to the next level of competition including counterparts throughout the U.S. Air Force.

"These airmen are an outstanding example of the fine citizens serving in the Maryland National Guard," said Governor Ehrlich. "They will represent Maryland and the citizens they protect with pride and dignity as they compete for these distinguished honors."

Frederick County resident, Senior Airman Michael S. Lacagnina, was awarded Outstanding Airman of the Year in the Airman category. Airman Lacagnina is an Aerospace Propulsion Journeyman assigned to the 175th Maintenance Squadron, Maryland Air National Guard. In 2000, Airman Lacagnina graduated with honors from Frederick High School in Frederick, Md., and also achieved the level of Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts of America. Airman Lacagnina earned the honor of top graduate upon the completion of his technical training as a Jet Engine Mechanic at Sheppard Air Force base, Texas.

Harford County resident, Tech. Sgt. Stephen L. Gray, was named Outstanding Airman of the Year in the non-commissioned officer category. Sergeant Gray is a Security Forces Craftsman assigned to the 175th Security Forces Squadron, Maryland Air National Guard. Sgt. Gray and his wife were instrumental in the creation of the 175th Security Force Squadron's family support network, which is designed to meet the unique

needs of the families of deployed Security Forces members. The network was implemented during the two-year activation of the unit following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Senior Master Sgt. John Alger, a resident of Rockingham County, Va., was recognized as the Outstanding Airman of the Year in the senior non-commissioned officer category. Sergeant Alger is the Supply Chief Enlisted Manager assigned to the 175th Logistics Readiness Squadron, Maryland Air National Guard. Sergeant Alger intends to pursue a master's degree at The Johns Hopkins University, with the ultimate goal of attaining a Ph.D. in computer science.

The Maryland Air National Guard is comprised of a State Headquarters in Baltimore, the 175th Wing at Martin State airport and its two flying units and support staff – the 104th Fighter Squadron and its A-10 jet fighters, and the 135th Airlift Squadron and its C-130J cargo aircraft. The Maryland Air National Guard, contributing nearly 80 million dollars annually to Maryland's economy, employs more than 1,600 full-time and traditional members.

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